

SAVELLI

INNER  
SPACE

DANTE'S

PARADISE-INFERNO

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SAVELLI INNER SPACE

THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART • WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Angelo Savelli, who came to this country from Italy over a decade ago, began creating paintings which by 1957 took on the simple but profound minimalization of surface which characterized much of the most advanced art of the period. These paintings were completely white on white and contained a hint of the harsh abstract expressionist style which preceded them only through the use of elements of collage. During this period Savelli pioneered in the development of a process of white relief lithography for which he is best known. In the next few years he began investigating the shaped canvas—before it became an accepted convention—and introduced pieces of rope as

a basic form. Nevertheless, his work looked Italian rather than American to those who were acquainted with it—a quality which, unfortunately, contributed to his difficulty in gaining acceptance at the level which his remarkable achievement deserved.



In 1964, Savelli began a series of white, box-like sculptures which contained, as the central image, a taut, heavy rope, also painted white. These were the first of a series of similar works of varying sizes which came to be titled *Dante's Inferno*. This title was suggested to the artist by Barnett Newman. Each work can be seen to symbolize and is named after (each of) the characters in Dante's imaginary reality. There is the quality and content of a surrealist landscape in Savelli's white boxes to which the rope adds an element of reality, providing each space with a concrete symbol which, like the symbolic ladder, has profound metaphysical meaning.

Following the *Inferno* series, Savelli began making rectangular and triangular rooms which he titled *Paradise*. These are white spaces into which the viewer cannot enter and which contain white paintings. Their symmetry gives them a quality of serenity, and they appear to be permeated by etheralized light. These works are meant to be contemplated, that is, they open the way to achieving a metaphysical experience and a state of happiness, consistent with Dante's purpose in the *Divine Comedy*.

These rooms not only evolve out of the smaller boxes of the *Inferno*, but also have a source in Savelli's profound recollection of the small



grotto altar in Italy which was created by his grandfather and his uncle.

In all of the works of this period, one is aware of the presence of a vibrating form and light-space which, in the artist's words, is so constituted "as to blend into the viewer's aura in order to reach an aesthetic, ideal unity."

These remarkable works will be exhibited in Washington at the Henri Gallery and at The Corcoran Gallery of Art. They prove to be a contemporary interpretation of a universal theme depicting the process from damnation to heavenly bliss by means of new symbols and by the artist's extraordinary use of the effect of light and geometrical space.

JAMES HARITHAS    Director, The Corcoran Gallery of Art.





PARADISE II, 1967.

20' x 20' x 14' 5" appr.

Full scale model in wood to  
be executed in baked white aluminum.





White is  
purified  
by  
light  
and fire  
geometry is  
the expression  
of  
the eternal  
and  
divine  
but  
not  
emulating  
reality  
but  
giving  
stimulus  
toward  
revelation  
and  
ideal


PARADISE I, 1966.





The vertical line  
presents  
the symbolic  
image of man  
standing  
with dignity  
and severity  
as well as  
winner  
over  
disaster  
cruelty of nature  
and  
mankind

DANTE'S INFERNO, 1964-1968 (detail).  
Baked white aluminum, wood, plexiglass, rope.



PLATO 6, 1966.  
9' 6" x 2' 6"  
Baked white aluminum.

#### SAVELLI BIOGRAPHY

- 1911 Born October 30, Pizzo Calabria, Italy.
- 1923-29 Studied Ginnasio Filangieri Vibo, Valentia, Italy.  
Received first instructions from his uncle Alfonso Barone.
- 1930-36 Maturità Artistica, Liceo Artistico, Rome, Italy.  
Diploma, Accademia Di Belle Arti, Rome.  
Studied with Ferruccio Ferrazzi.
- 1940 Invited to teach at Liceo Artistico, Rome, Italy.
- 1945 Co-founder of the Art Club of Rome.
- 1948 Lived in Paris for almost one year.
- 1954 Established his residence in New York, USA.
- 1960 Explored in a new direction the lithographic process for his white reliefs.  
Established the painting program and conducted classes at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- 1964 Biennale of Venice—exhibited "The White Room."  
(Graphics and wall reliefs.)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ONE-MAN SHOWS:

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1941 | Galleria Roma, Rome  |
| 1942 | Galleria della Spigna, Milan<br>Galleria Cairola, Genova   |
| 1943 | Galleria del Ritrovo, Rome   |
| 1944 | Galleria San Marco, Rome   |
| 1946 | Galleria Cronache, Bologna<br>Galleria Oblo, Capri   |
| 1947 | Galleria Naviglio, Milan<br>Galleria del Secolo, Rome<br>Galleria Michelazzi, Trieste<br>Galleria del l'Obelisco, Rome |
| 1951 | Galleria San Marco, Rome   |
| 1952 | Centre d'Art Italien, Paris  |
| 1953 | Galleria Numero, Florence  |
| 1954 | Galleria Naviglio, Milan<br>Retrospective Exhibition, Palazzo Del Governo, Catanzaro                                   |
| 1955 | The Contemporaries, New York   |
| 1956 | D'Amecourt Gallery, Washington   |
| 1958 | Castelli Gallery, New York<br>Galleria del Cavallino, Venice   |
| 1959 | Galleria Selecta, Rome<br>Ellison Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas   |
| 1960 | Tweed Gallery, University of Minnesota, Duluth   |
| 1961 | Galleria del Naviglio, Milan<br>Galleria del Grattocielo, Legnano<br>Galleria Art Workshop, Positano                   |
| 1962 | Peter Deitsch Gallery, New York<br>Galleria Quadrante, Firenze   |
| 1963 | D'Arcy Gallery, New York<br>Art Alliance, Philadelphia   |
| 1964 | XXXII International Biennale, Venice<br>Eastern Illinois University, Charleston<br>Wellfleet Art Gallery, Wellfleet    |
| 1966 | Contemporary Prints and Drawings, Chicago, Illinois  |
| 1969 | Henri Gallery, Washington  |



# SELECTED GROUP SHOWS:

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|------|------|---|
|      | 1958 | New Tendencies in Italian Art, Fondazione Roma, New York and Rome   |
|      | 1959 | Graphics, Pratt-Contemporaries Workshop, Riverside Museum, New York<br>Collage, Area Gallery, New York<br>Annual Graphics Exhibition, Library of Congress, Washington<br>Quadriennale di Roma, Rome   |
|      | 1961 | George Lester Gallery, Rome<br>Primio Lissone (international show)<br>IV Biennale del Mediterraneo, organized by the Biennale of Venice, in Cairo   |
|      | 1962 | The Brooklyn Museum, New York<br>American Federation of Arts (circulating exhibition)<br>Premio Marzotto selected European artists' show in Valdagno and Baden<br>La Deuxieme Exposition du Relief (international show), Gallerie Siecle, Paris<br>Print Club of Philadelphia   |
|      | 1963 | White Chapel Gallery, London<br>Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris<br>Society of American Graphic Artists, New York<br>University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia<br>DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Mass.<br>Art Alliance, Philadelphia<br>Library of Congress, Washington<br>Graphics, Seattle and Portland<br>USA Cultural Exchange Show in 5 important Russian cities<br>Biennale Internazionale Grafica di Lubiana, Yugoslavia<br>"Moods of Light," circulating exhibition, American Federation of Arts<br>Biennale of Palermo, Italy |
| 1935 |      | Mostra Regionale Calabrese, Catanzaro   |
| 1943 |      | Quadriennale di Roma, National Exhibition   |
| 1944 |      | Art Club of Rome in Cairo, Alexandria, and Buenos Aires   |
| 1945 |      | Biennale. Reggio Calabria   |
| 1946 |      | Roman Group in Washington, D. C. and New York   |
| 1948 |      | Art Club in Union of South Africa, Johannesburg   |
| 1949 |      | Exhibition of Italian Art, Salzburg and Vienna  |
| 1950 |      | Biennale di Venezia<br>Fifty Italian Painters, Paris  |
| 1951 |      | Art Club in Stockholm, Helsinki, Gothenburg, Oslo, Copenhagen   |
| 1952 |      | Biennale di Venezia   |
| 1953 |      | Arte Astratta Italiana e Francese, Galleria Nazionale D'Arte Moderna, Rome  |
| 1955 |      | Stable Annual, New York   |
| 1956 |      | International Collage, Rose Fried Gallery, New York<br>Graphics, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.  |
| 1957 |      | Castelli Gallery, Poindexter Gallery and Brooklyn Museum, New York<br>"Collage in America," circulating exhibition, American Federation of Arts<br>Art Gallery, Baltimore Museum<br>American Painting, circulating exhibition in Canada   |
|      | 1964 | The Spirit of The Classic, Janis Gallery, New York<br>The Contemporaries, New York<br>The Brooklyn Museum, New York<br>The Jewish Museum, New York<br>Exposition Biennale, Internationale de Gravure, Tokyo   |
|      | 1965 | Galleria d'Arte Ambasciata del Brasile, Rome<br>Galleria Ferrari, Verona<br>The State University College, Potsdam, New York   |
|      | 1966 | Quadriennale d'Arte di Roma, Rome<br>Library of Congress, Washington<br>Art Alliance, Philadelphia<br>The Brooklyn Museum, New York<br>Galleria Obelisco, Rome<br>The Saga 47th Annual, New York<br>Annual Exhibition, Whitney Museum, New York   |
|      | 1967 | Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia<br>University of Kentucky Art Gallery, Lexington<br>Annual Exhibition, Whitney Museum, New York  |
|      | 1968 | The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada<br>Annual Exhibition, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia<br>Saga A.A.A. Gallery, New York<br>University of Kentucky Art Gallery, Lexington<br>Grand Prize Winners, Venice Biennale, 1948-1968, Rive Gauche Gallery, Rome<br>The Maremont Collection, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona   |
|      | 1969 | The Corcoran Gallery of Art. Biennial Exhibition of American Art<br>Two Decades of American Prints, 1947-1968, The Brooklyn Museum, New York  |

I see with white eyes

I think with white mind

I act with white hands in a white body

I walk in a white world

I breathe in a white sky

I am high, high on a white mountain

And I am looking deeply down





Between earth and sky,  
Between known and unknown,  
Between inferno and paradise.

With balance and tension  
and equilibrium and continuity,  
Aesthetic fulfillment  
of the human soul.

By sublimating the idea of proportion  
As divine concept  
And inner reality.

Going through an experience  
of concentration on a single image  
And a bidimensional space,  
To clarify our mirror mind  
In order to reach reality  
In its truthful state.  
To eliminate complicated dimensions  
In color and illusory space,  
Which are sources  
Of our deformed images  
Of reality and truth . . . and to see  
"The light  
That never changes."

